

Berlin

Berlin, the capital and largest city of Germany, is located in the northeastern part of the country of the SPREE RIVER. Its population is 3,420,119 (1990 est.).

The most populous city on the European continent before World War II, Berlin lay in ruins at the time of Germany's defeat in 1945; it was divided among the four victorious powers: the United States, the USSR, Great Britain, and France, each of which had its own sector. Germany itself was also divided into zones of occupation, with Berlin, Germany's historic capital, in the middle of the Soviet zone. The hostility that developed in the postwar years between the Western Allies (the United States, Britain, and France) and the USSR had its effect on Germany and Berlin. In 1949 the three Western zones were united to form the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany), and the Soviet zone became the German Democratic Republic (East Germany, or the GDR). At the same time, the three western sectors of Berlin were united to form West Berlin, and the Soviet sector became East Berlin, which in 1954 became the capital of the GDR. For the next four decades, West Berlin was a "stateless city." Although it was generally regarded as a part of West Germany and sent delegates to the West German parliament in Bonn, these delegates had only observer status—they could not vote.

When the division of Germany ended in 1990, the reunified city of Berlin was declared the capital of the newly enlarged Federal Republic, but according to a plan adopted in June 1991, the shift of government institutions from Bonn was scheduled to occur gradually, over a period of years.

Berlin is situated in the northern German lowlands in the area traditionally known as the Mark of BRANDENBURG. It covers an area of 886 sq km (342 sq mi) and has 23 districts, 12 from the former West Berlin, and 11 from the former East Berlin. In 1990, 2,147,540 people lived in the western part and 1,272,579 in the eastern part.

Economy

Western Berlin's manufactured products include electrical appliances, machinery, garments, optical goods, pharmaceuticals, and printed matter. In the 1980s it developed an important service industry and became a major convention city. Tourism is also important.

Berlin is an important center of scientific research, with some 180 research institutions, among them the Hahn-Meitner Institute for Nuclear Research, the Science Center Berlin, the Fritz Haber Institute, and the AKADEMIE DER WISSENSCHAFTEN.

The economy of eastern Berlin mirrors that of the former GDR in general: faltering industrial production and rising unemployment, caused by the difficult transition from a planned economy to a market system. Wages are 30 to 40 percent below western levels. Unemployment has hit women particularly hard. In eastern Berlin, as elsewhere in the GDR, nearly all women were employed outside the home, as opposed to about half in the western part of the city.

Transportation

Public transportation includes some 150 bus routes, a streetcar system in eastern Berlin, and an extensive subway (U-Bahn) and elevated train (S-Bahn) system. Berlin also has four long-distance railroad stations and three commercial airports (Tegel and Tempelhof in the west and Schönefeld in the east). An extensive network of canals also exists. The AVUS expressway crosses Berlin; highways from outside the city feed into the Berliner Ring, an expressway that encircles the city completely.

Government

Berlin is one of the 15 Lander (states) of the Federal Republic of Germany, and its executive body, called the Senat, exercises both state and municipal functions. The Senat consists of a governing mayor (Regierender Bürgermeister) and 15 senators, each of whom is responsible for a particular government department. The senators, nominated by the governing mayor, must be approved by a majority of the Abgeordnetenhaus (House of Representatives), which is Berlin's parliament. The administrations of the city's 23 districts are responsible for implementing the laws and ordinances of the city under the supervision of the Senate.

Landmarks

The city's famous landmarks include the BRANDENBURG GATE and the tree-lined avenue leading up to it, called Unter den Linden. Nearby is the REICHSTAG building (1894), home of Germany's old parliament, which was destroyed by fire in 1933, damaged in World War II, and restored in 1968. The bombed-out ruin of the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, left standing as a reminder of the destruction of war, dominates what was, before unification, the center of West Berlin; it stands at the beginning of the Kurfurstendamm, the main thoroughfare of the western part of the city. In the Tiergarten Park is the Victory Column (Siegessaule), constructed in 1873 to commemorate the Franco-Prussian War. Most famous of all is the BERLIN WALL, the hated symbol of the divided city. A few sections of it remain standing and are used as outdoor art galleries.

Cultural and Educational Institutions

Berlin has long been a cultural and educational center, noted for its State Opera, the BERLIN PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA, its museums and galleries, and its universities. The Humboldt University was founded (1809) as Friedrich Wilhelm University and became a model for universities around the world in the 19th century. The Free University of Berlin was founded in 1948.

History

Berlin and the neighboring town of Kolln were first mentioned in documents in the 13th century, but the city's rise to prominence was associated with the HOHENZOLLERN dynasty, which acquired the electorate of Brandenburg in 1415. Their gradually increasing power consolidated the status of Berlin as the capital of Brandenburg in the 16th century. FREDERICK WILLIAM (r. 1640-88), known as the Great Elector, induced artisans and merchants to settle in the city, added new districts, and laid out the central area, including the avenue Unter den Linden. The Jewish community was established in 1671, and large numbers of French Huguenots fleeing persecution settled in Berlin. By 1720 the Huguenots constituted 20 percent of the city's population. Under FREDERICK I (r. 1688-1713), Berlin was united with Kolln and three other towns and became the capital of the new Kingdom of Prussia. Frederick built the city's elegant Charlottenburg Palace.

In the reign of Frederick II (the Great, r. 1740-86), Berlin emerged as a major European city. By 1781 it had 147,000 inhabitants and was known as "Athens on the Spree" because of its concentration of artists and scholars. It became the capital of Germany in 1871 and flourished in the age of imperial Germany (1871-1918) and the Weimar Republic (1919-33). Its scientific establishment boasted such luminaries as Robert Koch, Max Planck, and Albert Einstein, while the Berlin theater was distinguished by the work of Gerhart Hauptmann, Max Reinhardt, and Bertolt Brecht. In the visual arts the city was the home of the Berlin Dada group. In 1920 the surrounding towns and villages merged with the city to form Greater Berlin, with a population of 4 million.

Berlin suffered great destruction during World War II, and the damage, especially in the east, took decades to repair. The life of the postwar city was marked by dramatic episodes such as the BERLIN AIRLIFT (1948-49), and the building of the Berlin Wall (1961), which practically cut off communication between the eastern and western sectors. When the GDR opened its borders in 1989, thousands of East Berliners thronged through openings in the Wall to the West. The emotional and highly publicized reunion that followed presaged the reunification of Germany that took place less than a year later.

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